

Although the burden of grief can become easier to bear, always there is the memory of another time and the feeling of sadness over an unfinished life. Yet, the completeness of a life is not measured in length only. It is measured in the deeds and commitments that give a life its purpose. And the commitment of these lives was clear to all: They defended our Nation; they liberated the oppressed; they served the cause of peace. And all Americans who have known the loss and sadness of war, whether recently or long ago, can know this: The person they love and miss is honored and remembered by the United States of America. May God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. in the Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery.

Remarks to the White House National Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

June 1, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Thank you all. Please be seated, thanks for coming. Thank you so much.

I want to thank you all for caring about your country enough that you are here to inspire others as to how to save lives. Welcome to Washington, DC. I want to thank Tonja Myles, the director of Set Free Indeed, from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for introducing me. Tonja is—when I talk about people involved in saving people's lives, I'm speaking about people like Tonja and those on the stage with me. You heard their stories. I have too. And on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank them and you for serving in the army of compassion.

By feeding the hungry, by healing the addicted, by loving and caring for refugees, you represent the true strength, the real strength, the genuine strength of the United States of America. And I am grateful for what you do.

We're here to talk today about the relationship between people of faith and Government policy. I believe it is in the national interest that Government stand side by side with people of faith who work to change lives for the better. I understand in the past, some in Government have said Government can-

not stand side by side with people of faith. Let me put it more bluntly, Government can't spend money on religious programs simply because there's a rabbi on the board, cross on the wall, or a crescent on the door. I viewed this as not only bad social policy—because policy bypassed the great works of compassion and healing that take place—I viewed it as discrimination. And we needed to change it.

So we've hosted regional conferences to raise the issue. I try to talk about the Faith-Based Initiative a lot. Part of my job is to say to the American people, "Here is a fantastic opportunity to help America become what we want it to be, a land of hope and promise and love and compassion."

And so we're—and we're having regional conferences like this. I'm proud to report that we've reached more than 10,000 faith-based and community groups with the message that we want your help, that the Federal Government now welcomes your work, and do not fear being discriminated against by the Government.

Listen, I fully understand there are people in the faith community who have said, "Why do I want to interface with the Federal Government?" [*Laughter*] "Why would I want to interface with a group of people that want to try to get me to not practice my faith?" It's hard to be a faith-based program if you can't practice faith, and the message to you is, "We're changing the culture here in America."

And we're making progress. We're changing the attitude here in Washington, DC. I want to thank the Cabinet Secretaries who are here. It should indicate to you that my Cabinet not only has gotten the directive from the President that I expect all Cabinets to be open to faith-based programs, but it should speak to the character of the people who I've called to serve the country. Secretary Ann Veneman, Elaine Chao, Rod Paige, Tony Principi, thank you all for coming today. Hector Barreto of the SBA and Andrew Natsios of USAID, thank you all for coming. I see the Justice Department is represented by Deputy Attorney General Jim Comey. Thank you all for coming. This is a—HUD is represented.

Listen, what I'm telling you is, is that I told our Government, the people in my Government, "Rather than fear faith programs, welcome them. They're changing America. They do a better job than Government can do." [Applause] Thank you all.

I know Jim Ryun is here, the Congressman from Kansas, and his wife, Anne. Thanks for coming. There he is. My advice is don't go jogging with him. [Laughter]

I have to tell you, I came from a—what we call a roundtable—the table happened to be square, but it's one of those Government things—[laughter]—where I met with some healers and doers and community changers.

Mark Franken is the executive director of Migration and Refugee Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops—is with us. Wintley Phipps is the founder, president, and CEO of the U.S. Dream Academy, from Columbia, Maryland. Archbishop Harry Flynn of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis; Bishop Don Wuerl, the Bishop of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; my friend from the great State of Texas, Tony Evans of the Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship. There's a few Texans here, Tony, that know of you. Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, California; Reverend Cheryl Anthony Mobley is the founder and CEO of the Judah International, from Brooklyn; and from a local church here, Jim Sprouse, the pastor of Trinity United Methodist.

We talked about what they see, what they hear, the frustrations in dealing with the Government. It's part of making sure—this outreach is part of making sure that I hear as best I can firsthand from people whether or not the strategy is being properly implemented, because I understand amongst our prosperity there is suffering still and despair in America. And that troubles every American, regardless of their political standing or where they're from. Where there is despair, we must work to provide hope. Where there is loneliness, we must work to provide love.

There are men and women in our country who doubt, who have serious doubts about what we call the American Dream. And that—as the President of a country who has heralded the American Dream, that's troubling to realize that some citizens simply cannot connect with that notion of dreaming

about the future. There are—there is loneliness, and you know what I'm talking about. There are people who are so addicted to alcohol and drugs that their vision is clouded, that they can't see a more hopeful tomorrow. These are the types of problems we face.

As well our great Nation receives tens of thousands of refugees, which is good, by the way, that America be a welcoming society. These souls flee persecution and need help when they come to our country. Not only are there people in our neighborhoods who are addicted and lonely and homeless and hungry; there are people who've come from faraway lands that need the same concern and care and love that our fellow citizens receive.

We've got teenage mothers in America who feel abandoned and in need. There are children in America, whose mom or dad is in prison, wondering whether or not there's any hope. In other words, we got problems in this society, and those of us who have been given the high honor of holding office must utilize every resource, every power we have to help solve those problems for the good of the country.

See, I understand the limitations of government. Governments can hand out money. But governments cannot put love in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. The truth of the matter is that comes when a loving citizen puts their arm around a brother and sister in need and says, "I love you, and God loves you, and together we can perform miracles."

And miracles happen all the time in America. They happen because loving souls take time out of their lives to spread compassion and love. And lives are changing. Listen, our society is going to change, one heart and one soul at a time. It changes from the bottom up, not the top down. It changes when the soldiers in the armies of compassion feel wanted, encouraged, and empowered. And that's what the Faith-Based and Community Initiative is all about. How do we gather up the strength of the country, the vibrancy of faith-based programs? The social entrepreneurs, how do we encourage them?

And one way to do so is to hold conferences like these that, frankly, give me a chance and a platform to speak to the country

and say as clearly as I can, “We welcome the army of compassion. We understand the power of faith in America, and the Federal Government will assist—not discriminate against you.”

There is no better way to clarify for our fellow citizens the power of faith-based programs than to speak about examples, to hold up stories about lives who have been changed, starting with Veronica Braewell.

I just met with Veronica. The folks I told you were at the roundtable met with Veronica. Veronica is—was from Liberia. She’s a refugee. She was telling us what it’s like to see the violence and horror that took place in that country as rebel groups swept through the land, taking lives if they just felt like it. And this young lady clearly has got a large heart and deep concern for her fellow citizens. She came, and the Catholic Social Agency in Allentown, Pennsylvania—a faith-based group, by the way—took her and her family into their collective bosom and loved them. And they helped her find jobs and a place to live and clothing and transportation.

You can imagine what it would be like to be a young girl coming from Liberia, having been traumatized by violence, to a strange country. Fortunately, her arrival was aided by people who said, “Gosh, what can I do to help change somebody’s life and to help them?” She’s just completed her training to be a nursing assistant. Soon, she’ll start work at a senior care facility near her home. She said this, “It’s like a second hope again. I believe in myself. I am grateful to God.” Thanks to the Catholic Social Agency in Allentown, Pennsylvania, a soul has been lifted.

Elijah Anyieth is with us. He was born in a rural village in Sudan. He fled as a young man when his village was bombed, and he just wandered—talked about sleeping on the ground, looking for food. Fortunately, the Commonwealth Catholic Charities helped rescue him, and he found a home near Richmond, Virginia. With the help of the program, he graduated from high school with honors. Last month, he finished his first year of college. He’s studying to be a mechanical engineer. Here’s what he said, “When I imagine my life now and how it would have been, I can’t find ways to thank them enough.” He’s talking about the Common-

wealth Catholic Charities staff. See, the faith-based program helped save this guy’s life and helped him have a bright future.

I met Derrill Frazier. He should be up here, not me. Needless to say, when his story is—he’s a young guy. He’s never seen his mom or rarely sees his mom, never met his dad, who is in prison, serving a lifetime in prison. By the way, his grandmother, Constance Morgan, brought him here today. It was my honor to meet Constance. You know what she told me? She said, “Mr. President, I pray for you.”

Derrill joined the U.S. Dream Academy. It’s a mentorship program funded by the Health and Human Services. See, Health and Human Services is now funding a faith-based program that encourages mentors, people to interface in the lives of a fellow like Derrill who wonders whether there’s any hope for him. He plays basketball, and he talks about his favorite subject—this is with his mentor—U.S. history. I kind of liked U.S. history too. *[Laughter]*

Here’s what he said: “I don’t sit around just watching TV anymore. I like school. If I don’t go to school, I can’t reach my goals—to go to college and become a lawyer.” See, here’s a fellow who all of the sudden has got a goal. He’s been inspired by something government really can’t provide, which is a loving person to interface with him in a way that helps—changes his life.

The grant came out of the Federal Government to help fund this mentoring program. It is money well spent. The taxpayers of the country must understand that we should not focus on the process; we ought to focus on the results.

Let me tell you about this story. It is a success story because of a faith-based program. Brad Lassiter—he’s the youngest of 17 children. He spent most of his childhood without a home. His education ended in the fourth grade. Essentially, he was abandoned and lived on the street, got addicted to drugs, took a bullet in the mouth, actually, at one point in his life, went to prison. And Gospel Rescue Ministries gave him a place to live when he came out of prison. See, he started reading the Bible in prison. It is a powerful change agent when you start reading the

Bible in prison. And this guy was lost, and now he's found.

He said this—here's what Brad said. Brad said, "God blessed me. The Mission gave me an opportunity to change my life spiritually, education-wise, and to build character. They made me want to change." Actually, they were the agents, Brad. They were just the messenger. When he finished his recovery—I want you to hear the story—this is a guy abandoned on the streets, drug addict, couldn't read beyond the third grade. He now has a job at the World Bank, and he's going to college to study computer science.

America changes one heart at a time, one soul at a time, and while our fellow citizens can't do everything, they can do something to help change America one soul at a time. That's the philosophy behind the faith-based groups. It is the Government's strong desire to empower this fabric, this social fabric of our society where faith-based programs large and small feel empowered, encouraged, and welcomed into changing lives.

Look, I fully understand it's important to maintain the separation of church and state. We don't want the state to become the church, nor do we want the church to become the state. We're on common agreement there. But I do believe that groups should be allowed to access social service grants so long as they don't proselytize or exclude somebody simply because they don't share a certain faith. In other words, there's a way to accomplish the separation of church and state and, at the same time, accomplish the social objective of having America become a hopeful place and a loving place. And so I want to—so the question this administration is starting to ask or is asking is, "Are you getting the results?" That's all we care about. Are you meeting the standards of church and state, and are you getting results? And if so, if you say, "Yes," the Federal Government, rather than being fearful of you, ought to say, "Thank you. Thank you for doing your mission to change the United States of America."

So I wanted to make sure that the faith-based groups simply got equal access and equal treatment when it came to the billions of dollars we spend at the Federal level. That

was the first step toward making sure the Faith-Based Initiative was strong and vibrant.

And of course, it got stuck in the Congress. [Laughter] It's a process debate that takes places up on Capitol Hill rather than a results-oriented debate. If you're a results-oriented debater, you say, "All I care about is making sure that the addict receives help. And if it takes changing a person's heart to change addiction, we ought to welcome the power that changes a person's heart in our society."

So I got frustrated and signed an Executive order. [Laughter] And it said that—it directed the Federal agencies, which are run by some of the folks here, that we will reverse regulations that discriminate against faith-based organizations. There were regulations on the books that made it nearly impossible for people of faith—all faiths, by the way. When you hear me talk about faith, I'm talking about all faiths, whether it be the Jewish faith or the Christian faith or the Muslim faith or the Hindu faith. All faiths have got the power to transform lives.

In other words, they made it easier for people of all faith to access the billions—we spend billions of dollars here in Washington, DC. And those billions ought to be open for grantmaking. In other words, if you're able to show that you're successful at meeting social objectives, then you ought to be allowed to access the money. That's my attitude.

And so we're making progress. I'm here to give you a progress report. They spent \$1.1 billion on grants to faith-based groups. It's kind of hard to fully account for it. I would call that an estimate; \$1.1 billion, it's an increase of 15 percent over 2002. That's good progress. However, there's a lot more money available. That's what I hope the conference explains to you, that there is money throughout our Government available for faith-based programs. And the idea is to teach you how to access that money, how to make sure the grantmaking process is understandable, and how to make sure that people in your communities do not fear the bureaucracy interfering in your mission, which is a vital part of having a strong, vibrant, Faith-Based Initiative.

The other thing that's important is I wanted to make sure that as we—as people access

Federal money, that it not go to the same programs over and over and over again. In other words, part of what we're trying to do is spur entrepreneurship, is to provide money for new programs to flourish and bloom. Remember, a faith-based program can be a mega-church—and by the way, there's some fantastic churches in our country who spread faith throughout their ministry—or it can be a five-person staff. What we're interested in is the ability for programs to change lives. That's what we're interested in.

I was talking to Tony Evans. Tony and I—he's come up with a fantastic idea, by the way, to encourage more leverage in the faith community: Inner-city churches need to work with suburban churches and become the conduit for monies going into the inner city. The reason why is, is that the inner-city church is what we call at the grassroots. They understand the programs that work and the programs that don't work. Evans also assures me that as of being—as a result of being a successful church, in the sense that it's got a lot of building, a lot of members, and a pretty good-sized budget—by the way, he started with a—in a house; he started small and grew big—that he is willing to help young churches and faith-based programs in inner-city Dallas, Texas, as to how to accomplish the mission, how to grow from little to big, how to grow from wanting to be vibrant to successful. And that's what the Faith-Based Initiative is meant to do. It's meant to allow for access of Federal money but at the same time spawn the entrepreneurial spirit, what I call social entrepreneurs, and encourage their growth.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded \$113 million in grants to first-time faith-based recipients. So in other words, what I'm telling you is, it's one thing to make sure that the grant process is open. It's another thing to make sure that as we—as money goes out the door, that it does so not only to achieve results but to encourage the development and expansion of faith-based programs throughout the country. There's a lot to do. Don't get me wrong. One of the great things about these meetings is we get feedback to improve the regulatory process. Look, I fully concede there's a lot of regulations in Washington. [Laughter]

And we can always work to further reduce the impact of regulation, and we expect feedback from people who are frustrated and/or happy with the process you see.

The Departments of Labor, Agriculture, Health and Human Services have issued new regulations. In other words, we're constantly fine-tuning regulations to enforce the principle of equal treatment throughout their agencies. Education and Veteran Affairs have now completed theirs. And so one of the things that we've got to constantly work here on Washington is to make sure we take your feedback and change practice, obviously within the law, so that we can better hear the voices of those who are changing our country.

USAID—many of you who have got operations overseas have interfaced with USAID. I appreciate Andrew Natsios changing—proposing regulations to end the discrimination against faith-based groups receiving foreign grants.

So to make sure all this is coordinated, I picked Jim Towey. Where are you, Towey? There he is. Yes, he's over in the corner. See, he—Towey was Mother Teresa's lawyer. [Laughter] Now that is a litigious society if Mother Teresa needs a lawyer. [Laughter] Anyway, he's a good one.

So he has an office in the White House. I see Towey a lot because this is an initiative that is important for America and the future. Jim's job has been to set up these meetings to listen to people out in the field, to answer questions. His job is to answer my questions, like how much money has gone out the door? It's one thing to have a Faith-Based Initiative, but if nobody is getting any grants, it's just paper. I'm not interested in paper. I'm not—I'm here—I'm not here—I'm here to try to make a change for the better. I'm interested in results. Towey has heard me say it a lot. "Are we succeeding? And if not, what is causing us—what is frustrating—where are the bottlenecks to success? Where are the problems?" He's constantly asking those questions.

That's why we set up faith-based offices in the Cabinet—in our Cabinet agencies. See, I want somebody responsible so when they report to the Secretary and I get on the Secretary, the Secretary can take it back

down the chain of command and say, "Why are we frustrating people here? How come we haven't done a better job?" They're constantly asking the questions of their faith-based offices to make sure that the mission is accomplished.

Now, look, one of the—part of the feedback we've gotten is that there's a bottleneck at the State and local governments. Some of the money—[*applause*]*—yes, see what I mean? [Laughter]* Some of the money is block-granted to States. And therefore, if there's not a Governor who has a faith-based office who understands the vast potential of changing their State, you'll be frustrated. I know that. So part of our mission is to work with you to help change the attitude at the State level. We got our hands full here, by the way, too. Don't get me wrong, [*Laughter*] There's a bureaucratic mindset that we're working to change in Washington, but we also want to help you with the Governors and mayors.

There are—there's 20 Governors and over 100 mayors who have faith-based offices. I think when people realize that more money is now available to the faith communities, they'll change their attitude about whether or not to be accommodating to faith-based programs. I think they'll change their attitude. They should change their attitude because if they dig into their societies, get in the cities, and find out the lives that are being changed and realize their communities are better for it, they will say, "Give me the results." They'll say, "I'm a better mayor or Governor because lives are changing, not because of me but because of the faith community that's changing America one heart at a time."

I have called upon Congress. Not only do we want to make sure that the monies being spent now are accessible to the faith community but we want to make sure that—I've called upon for some specific programs to help the faith community. One is called Access to Recovery. It is a \$100 million initiative to help the addict—is what it is. It's an interesting approach to funding social programs. In this case, we actually fund the addict. In other words, the money goes to the addict, and the addict gets to choose the program that is best for her or him. It's a change in

attitude. Generally, we kind of tend to fund the program, oftentimes not asking whether they're effective or not. This time we're sending the money to the addict so that the addict can make the decision that meets his or her needs. I will tell you, the cornerstone of any good recovery program is the understanding there is a Higher Being to which—to whom you can turn your life and therefore save your life. It is the crux of many, many a successful addiction program. It—and our Government ought to understand that. Congress needs to provide ample money for the Access to Recovery initiative to help addicts change their lives by saving their lives.

I am deeply concerned about a society in which many boys and girls need love. They need—and I mentioned to you my concern about a child whose mom or dad is in prison. It's got to be incredibly lonely to have your mom or dad in prison, wondering whether or not—she's wondering whether there's any hope, you know?

And there is hope, particularly when that child feels love. And so I've asked Congress to provide money for mentoring programs, particularly for a child who—whose mom or dad is in prison. And many of those mentoring programs come right out of inner-city churches and suburban churches. Listen, some of the best mentoring programs in America happen out of our churches and synagogues and mosques. And we ought not to be afraid of funding of those programs.

After all, if you exist because you've heard the universal call to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself, if that is the creed, the cornerstone, then surely out of that organization will come people who are willing to do so. And part of loving your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself is mentoring a child and saying, "You may be lonely, but I love you," and "What can I do to help lift your spirit?" So I put in funding requests for programs such as this.

Six hundred thousand—more than 600,000 inmates will be released from prison this year. Those are a lot of souls that need help coming into our society. I can't think of a better place for a prisoner to go—is to a church or a synagogue or a mosque and say, "I need help. I have just come out of incarceration, and can you help me with my

life and the future? Can you provide guidance for me?” And so we’ve got a \$300 million initiative I put before Congress to help with these prison reentry programs, all of which will give our faith community a chance to heal the broken heart.

One of the things—I’ll never forget this—when I was the Governor of Texas, one of the early initiatives in my governorship, one of the faith-based initiatives, was to turn over a part of the prison unit to a faith program, Chuck Colson’s program. He convinced me that this would be a great opportunity to change lives. And it would be better than stamping license plates. And so we put a voluntary program in the prison unit in Fort Bend County, Texas—the Sugarland, Texas, area. And I went over to see the program, and sure enough, I was talking about it on the microphones and out comes the prison choir. Now, this wasn’t exactly a really large choir. It was probably 10 people. And I got in the mood and starting singing “Amazing Grace” with the Sugarland Prison choir, from this unit that was a faith-based unit. And I’m rocking back and forth with a guy, and on the front page of the Houston Chronicle is a picture—[laughter]—is a picture of me and a guy who has been in prison for 19 years for murder. [Laughter] The other day, we have a meeting in the White House, in the Roosevelt Room, and sure enough, sitting next to me is the guy who I rocked with who is now—[laughter]—whose life was changed and saved because of faith.

I’m telling America we need to not discriminate against faith-based programs. We need to welcome them so our society is more wholesome, more welcoming, and more hopeful for every single citizen.

I want to thank you all for coming. Thank you all. One last word: I want to thank you for coming. It warms my heart to know that I am the President of a country full of so many decent, caring people. The strength of this country is not our military or the size of our wallets. The strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American people. That is the thing, in my judgment, that makes this country unique and different and strong. My job as the President of the United States is understand that and, as best as I humanly can, to elevate the spirit of the

country, to call upon people to follow their hearts, to say to the Federal Government, “Stand beside these soldiers, not against them. Be a wind at their back, not at their face, so that America can reach its full potential, so every citizen, regardless of race, creed, background, can have a chance to realize the full promise, the full extended promise of the greatest country on the face of this Earth.”

May God bless you and your works, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:22 a.m. at the Washington Hilton and Towers. In his remarks, he referred to Charles W. Colson, founder, Prison Fellowship Ministries.

**Executive Order 13342—
Responsibilities of the Departments
of Commerce and Veterans Affairs
and the Small Business
Administration With Respect to
Faith-Based and Community
Initiatives**

June 1, 2004

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to help the Federal Government coordinate a national effort to expand opportunities for faith-based and other community organizations and to strengthen their capacity to better meet America’s social and community needs, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Establishment of Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at the Departments of Commerce and Veterans Affairs and the Small Business Administration.*

(a) The Secretaries of Commerce and Veterans Affairs and the Administrator of the Small Business Administration shall each establish within their respective agencies a Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (Center).

(b) Each of these Centers shall be supervised by a Director, appointed by the agency head in consultation with the White House